

Dueling Memorandums August 27

President Lyndon Johnson issued a memorandum to all federal departments and agencies on June 28, 1966, extolling the government's use of computers, and, at the same time, calling for increased efficiency.

The president noted that the "electronic computer" had had more impact on the government than any other modern technology. He noted the government overall used 2,600 computers and employed 71,000 people in connection with them --- at a cost over \$2 billion annually. He noted that he had promised more computer efficiency in a budget message to Congress for the coming year, and, in accordance with that, the federal government had to establish more effective procurement methods, make fuller use of existing facilities through joint-use arrangements, and re-utilize existing equipment.

Johnson tasked Bureau of the Budget with reporting to him by the end of the year about government efforts to achieve these, with continuing reports every six months thereafter. "I expect," he said, "all agencies to cooperate fully with the Bureau of the Budget...."

In response to the president's memorandum, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara issued his own memorandum on July 29 to DoD agencies. He stated that he wanted not only to attain the president's objectives, but also "provide an example for the rest of the government to follow." Most of the memorandum restated the president's objectives, but then noted that the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Installations and Logistics (ASD (I&L)) would immediately begin a review and evaluation of the DoD's computer management programs in response to the president's tasking. He concluded, "Each of you should give this matter personal attention and full cooperation."



Secretary McNamara

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This prompted the director of NSA, LTG Marshall Carter, USA, to send his own memorandum to ASD (I&I) on October 27. Carter first assured the ASD that “I am in full accord” with the review and evaluation of DoD computer systems. He described NSA’s computer system in general and wrote, “I view these operations as being outside the purview of the review and evaluation requested [in McNamara’s] memorandum.” The DIRNSA explained that NSA computer systems were continually under review by the Assistant Director for Research and Engineering, and NSA “will continue to use all available management techniques to attain [the] objectives.”

The Bureau of the Budget accepted NSA’s argument, but apparently did not coordinate it well. The ASD (I&L) raised the matter with NSA again in early November. NSA’s Assistant Director for Research and Engineering, Leo Rosen, reminded the ASD that this was so, and the position had also been supported by the Director of Defense Research and Engineering. Rosen ended his memorandum with the clear statement that “The security classification of these reports precludes their submission in other than cryptologic security channels.”

The matter seems to have ended there. No additional memorandums addressed the issue. NSA’s computer status remained its own business